

mid east

Approved For Release 2005/06/09 : CIA-RDP75B00380R000400010010-0

NOV 20 1973
NEW YORK TIMES

Officials Suspect Russians Sent Atom Arms to Egypt

By JOHN W. FINNEY

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 21—Defense officials said today that the United States had intelligence information suggesting that the Soviet Union might have moved nuclear warheads into Egypt at the height of the Arab-Israeli war last month.

Disagreement is reported within the Administration, however, over how conclusive the information is, and Secretary of State Kissinger said at a news conference today that the United States had "no confirmed evidence."

Nevertheless, there is said to be general agreement within the Administration that the intelligence information has raised the suspicion that Soviet nuclear weapons may have been shipped into Egypt some time after the outbreak of hostilities Oct. 6 and that some may remain there under Soviet control.

But two senior members of the Senate Armed Services Committee—John C. Stennis and Stuart Symington—said the evidence did not convince them.

The intelligence information was reportedly obtained before the Administration ordered a global precautionary alert of American armed forces Oct. 24 at a time when the Soviet Union was believed ready to send troops to the Suez Canal war zone.

Mr. Kissinger was then said to have cautioned the Soviet Union through Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin about the dangers of introducing nuclear weapons into the Middle East. Whether the intelligence information was another, previously undisclosed factor in the decision to order the alert was not made clear by United States officials.

At a news conference today, Mr. Kissinger said, "We have no confirmed evidence that the Soviet Union has introduced nuclear weapons into Egypt," and he noted, "There are public Soviet statements rejecting this allegation."

had given to Ambassador Dobrynin, Mr. Kissinger said: If the Soviet Union were to introduce nuclear weapons into local conflict this would be a very grave matter and would be a fundamental shift in traditional practices and one hard to reconcile with an effort to bring about a responsible solution."

A Key Word

The emphasis in Mr. Kissinger's comments was upon the word "confirmed, apparently leaving open the implication that the United States had at least circumstantial evidence that Soviet nuclear warheads had been sent to Egypt. At the point, Mr. Kissinger started to say, "We have no evidence," but then corrected himself to say "at least we have no confirmed evidence."

Commenting on the intelligence information, Senator Stennis, Democrat of Mississippi and chairman of the Armed Services Committee, told reporters that he was "not impressed" with the reports.

Senator Symington, Democrat of Missouri, chairman of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy's Subcommittee on Military Applications, said he had investigated reports that the Russians had sent nuclear warheads to Egypt and was "convinced they did not."

Part of the problem of interpreting the evidence arises from the intelligence methods for following the movement of the Soviet atomic weapons.

Difference of Views

Many defense analysts consider the methods sufficiently reliable to confirm the movement of atomic warheads into Egypt. But to other officials, particularly in the higher civilian ranks of the Defense Department and in the State Department, the intelligence techniques provide circumstantial rather than conclusive proof.

The interpretation of the intelligence information is further complicated, according to officials, by the fact that nuclear warheads leaving Egypt, at about the same time that some were observed entering

observed entering an Egyptian port with nuclear weapons left with most if not all the weapons still on board.

Nuclear warheads emit low levels of radiation. They are extremely difficult to detect at any distance. Their forms do not differ substantially from conventional warheads for missiles. For these two reasons alone, it is said, it is difficult to obtain "confirmatory evidence," either with radiation-detection devices or photographs from reconnaissance planes or satellites.

Missiles Sent to Egypt

Reports in the intelligence community that the Soviet Union had introduced atomic warheads in Egypt were first heard early this month after it became known that Soviet Scud missiles had been sent to Egypt during the war. With a 180-mile range—long enough to reach Israeli cities from launching points in north-eastern Egypt—The missiles can carry conventional or nuclear warheads.

At a meeting with reporters Nov. 2—at the time of the first of the reports—a senior defense official, while in effect confirming the presence of Scud missiles in Egypt, said there had been "no confirmatory

evidence" that nuclear warheads had been sent for them. As indicated by Mr. Kissinger's comments today, policy-making officials still believe that there is no conclusive evidence. But since Nov. 2 some defense officials have believed that evidence has accumulated to the point where they think that there is a reasonable probability that atomic warheads were sent to Egypt.

If some civilian officials remain skeptical about the intelligence information, it is partly because the Soviet Union, except for a brief period of cooperation with China in the nineteen fifties, has been hesitant to share nuclear weapons with other countries or to spread its nuclear arsenal beyond its borders or its forces stationed in Eastern Europe.

In contrast with the United States, which has equipped North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces with nuclear weapons to be used with American permission, there is no indication that the Soviet Union has similarly armed the Warsaw Pact forces.

In addition, some officials say that the Soviet Union would presumably be reluctant to station atomic warheads in a country where they could be seized by Arab terrorists.

Approved For Release 2005/06/09 : CIA-RDP75B00380R000400010010-0

ILLEGIB